DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 442 996 CE 080 436

AUTHOR Chrobak-Munoz, Erika
TITLE A Five-Stage Model To Facilitate Critical Reflection Using Interviewing Skills.
PUB DATE 2000-10-26
NOTE 6p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Conference on Transformative Learning (3rd, New York, NY, October 26-28, 2000).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; *Adult Learning; *Andragogy; *Critical Thinking; Experiential Learning; *Interviews; Learning Processes; Learning Theories; Lifelong Learning; Models; Outcomes of Education; *Teacher Student Relationship; *Transformative Learning
IDENTIFIERS *Critical Reflection

ABSTRACT

S. Brookfield proposed the "critical practice audit" technique as an experiential approach to helping learners engage in transformative learning by participating in some kind of action or practice. Ivey and Ivey proposed a five-stage interview structure involving numerous intentional interviewing skills, including the following: summarization, open questions, positive feedback, and supportive confrontation. The interviewing skills discussed by Ivey and Ivey and Brookfield's Critical Path Audit were used to develop a five-stage model to facilitate critical reflection in the context of one-on-one interview settings. The model assumes that such interviews are components of a transformative learning program that involves learners in action/practice. The five stages of the model are as follows: (1) structuring and modeling critical reflection; (2) reviewing the practice for identification and detailed description of a critical incident; (3) identifying the practitioner's vision of "the ideal" with regard to the critical incident; (4) surfacing and exploring the unquestioned assumptions underlying the practitioner's notion of "the ideal" and, when appropriate, generating alternative assumptions; and (5) determining how the practitioner's ideal has evolved in light of the critical reflection and how his or her response to incidents similar to the one analyzed will change. (The model's application has been illustrated with an example.) (MN)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 442 996

A Five-Stage Model to Facilitate Critical Reflection Using Interviewing Skills

Erika Chrobak-Muñoz

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

E Chrobak-Muñoz

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CE080436

A Five-Stage Model to Facilitate Critical Reflection Using Interviewing Skills

Erika Chrobak-Muñoz

This work presents a five-stage model to facilitate critical reflection in the context of one-on-one interviews. This model assumes the interviews to be a component of a Transformative Learning program, which involves the learners in action/practice. The stages involve modeling of critical reflection, identification of a critical incident and an analysis of the frames of reference implied in the learner's notion of 'the ideal.' Appropriate interviewing skills are proposed for each stage.

Critical Reflection, Interviewing, Critical Practice Audit

In this work, I propose a model to facilitate critical reflection by means of one-on-one interviews, emphasizing the relevance of effective communication skills. The learners or interviewees are assumed to be participating in a Transformative learning program, which involves them in some kind of action or practice. This model is an adaptation of the Critical Practice Audit technique (Brookfield, 1997) to the one-on-one interview situation. It is intended to help the interviewees critically reflect about their practice. In order to accommodate Brookfield's technique -which was designed as a way to assess critical thinking- to the interview setting, I will draw on the five-stage interview structure suggested by Ivey and Ivey (1999). Having a structure for the interview will be useful for the facilitator in the process of helping the interviewees identify and reflect upon the deeply rooted and often unquestioned assumptions that shape their practice. As a complement to this model, I will suggest which of the numerous intentional interviewing skills proposed by Ivey and Ivey (1999) -such as summarization, open questions, positive feedback and supportive confrontation- would be more effective and appropriate in each stage (please see Ivey and Ivey (1999) for a detailed description of these skills).

To begin with, let's examine Brookfield's (1997) definition of critical reflection: "[critical reflection] involves adults in recognizing and researching the assumptions that undergird their thoughts and actions". As Brookfield puts it, "assumptions give meaning and purpose to who we are and what we do. In many ways we are our assumptions." This process of calling into question our taken for granted frames of reference is an imperative task in transformative learning. Only through critical reflection can learners better understand their actions and make fresh judgments that allow them to transform their practice.

Brookfield (1997) defines the "critical practice audit" technique as an experiential approach to help learners "focus on the extent to which critical analysis is evident in their practice." The term "critical practice," he explains, "refers to any work people do that involves analyzing situations, reflecting on past experience, making judgments and decisions, and taking actions without the benefit of a standard protocol or uniform response that takes care of each and every problem they encounter." Brookfield proposes facilitating critical reflection by the identification of a critical incident. This fundamental feature of Brookfield's technique remains in the five-stage model I will propose.

In order to suggest how Brookfield's technique can be adapted to the one-on-one interview setting, I draw on the five-stage structure for intentional interviewing proposed by Ivey and Ivey (1999). According to Ivey and Ivey, the "interviewing structure can be used in many different settings with appropriate adaptations for the person and situation." While flexible and adaptable, Ivey and Ivey's interview structure proves to be an important part of the five-stage model, for it provides the interviewer/facilitator with a framework which will "ensure purpose and direction in the interview" Ivey and Ivey (1999). These authors' Five-Stage Interview Structure consists of the following stages: 1-Rapport/Structuring; 2-Gathering Information/Defining the problem; 3-Determining Outcomes; 4- Confronting Incongruity / Generating Alternatives; and 5-Generalization and transfer of learning.

Based on Ivey and Ivey's and Brookfield's works, I propose a model to facilitate critical reflection that consists of the following five stages:

1- Structuring and Modeling of critical reflection;
2- Review of the practice for identification and detailed description of a critical incident;
3- Identify the practitioner's vision of "the ideal" as regards the critical incident;
4- Surface and explore the unquestioned assumptions that underlie the practitioner's notion of "the ideal" -when appropriate, generate alternative assumptions; and
5- Determine how the practitioner's ideal has evolved in the light this critical reflection and how his/her response to incidents like the one analyzed will change.

Copyright © 2000 by Erika Chrobak-Muñoz

These stages constitute several steps that the interviewer may follow in order to effectively help learners to critically reflect upon their practice.

The first stage in facilitating critical reflection with the structure proposed above would involve structuring and modeling of critical reflection. The facilitator's aim in this stage is twofold. On the one hand, the facilitator will attempt to establish a good personal relationship with the practitioner and achieve as high a comfort level as possible. Thus, the interviewer will carefully explain the purpose of the interview and the steps involved in the process of critical reflection to the interviewee (structuring). On the other hand, the facilitator will model the process of critical reflection. "One of my strongest convictions... is that students learn to think, write, and speak in critical and democratic ways by watching respected leaders in positions of power and authority model these processes in their own lives. So, one of the first things that teachers of critical thinking need to do is make sure that they model a public commitment to and engagement in critical thinking, before they ask their own students to engage in critical thinking." (Brookfield, 1997). The interviewer's effective communication skills are crucial to the success of this first stage of the interview.

As far as the interviewing skills that are appropriate for this stage, I propose the use of attending skills and self-disclosure. Attending skills refer to the appropriate body language (such as nodding, leaning forward and taking notes) that shows interest and attention on the part of the interviewer. Self-disclosure is used in order to model critical reflection on one's practice. "Educators must be willing to critically reflect on aspects of their own practice as a first step in exploring how to encourage learners to move outside their comfortable paradigms." (Deshler & Kiely, 1995) By means of self-disclosure, "educators... take something they have written and said and analyze it publicly for its distortions, inaccuracies, oversimplification, contradictions and ambiguities. Educators do this to model the process [of critical reflection] and to encourage an atmosphere of trust" (Deshler & Kiely, 1995). If performed effectively, this process of sincere sharing will have a high symbolic value and will prompt learners to examine their own practice in the same way the facilitator questions his/her own.

The second stage in this five-stage model consists of a review of the practice for identification and detailed description of a critical incident. Brookfield (1997) defines a critical incident as "an event that can be called to mind easily and quickly because it is remembered vividly. We usually consider critical events to be significant because they are unexpected-they take us by surprise. Sometimes they are wonderful highs, sometimes they are demoralizing lows. Often they are a mix of both." In the context of the experiences of participants in transformative learning programs, a critical incident may be a challenging situation that the learners had to overcome in carrying out their projects, an activity that went wrong, or the fact that the plan was a great success. In addition, because both transformative learning and critical reflection are holistic processes, a critical incident could also be found, for instance, in how the practitioner felt at a particular moment in the practice or how he/she would like to feel. In other words, attention should be paid to the whole of experience, including some personal aspects that the interviewee may feel are risky to explore. "Attending to the whole of experience appears to lead to the generation of realistic, useful and relevant knowledge directly supportive of human flourishing. So far as I edit, limit, deny or ignore areas of my experience, this appears to narrow what I learn from it. This restriction may aid my short-term survival, but at the cost of some detachment from reality" (Postle, 1993).

Interviewing skills appropriate for this second stage are attending and listening skills, restatements, paraphrases, open and closed questions, reflection of feeling and meaning, and summary. For instance, the facilitator could start with an open question like: "How did the project go today?" and, by means of restatements and paraphrases of the interviewee's account, facilitate the identification of one or several critical incidents. Once a critical incident has been chosen for reflection (by both the facilitator and the interviewee), it would be appropriate for the interviewer to conclude this stage with a summary of the incident and a check-out to make sure that the interviewer understands the essence of the critical incident as experienced by the interviewee. In order for the description of the incident to be as vivid and detailed as possible, it would be helpful if the practitioners were asked to keep a journal where they described their their practice experience in a holistic manner; i.e. including information not only about what happened, but also about how they felt, what was challenging, what confused them, what was engaging, etc. The students would then have a record to refer to in the process of reflection. Once a critical incident has been successfully identified for reflection, the interview should move on to the next phase.

The third stage in this model is Determining the practitioner's 'ideal' as regards the critical incident. The notion of the 'ideal,' as understood by Ivey and Ivey (1999) consists of "how the client would like things to be." The interviewer will ask the practitioner what he/she would suggest as the ideal solution, or the ideal way in which the activity should have gone. The great value of the practitioner's articulating "the ideal" is the fact that the ideal solution the learner suggests is a reflection of his/her assumptions as regards the incident. For instance, in the context of a

teacher education program, a student-teacher may identify the fact that a minority student disrupts the class as a critical incident to reflect upon. If the student-teacher suggests that 'the ideal' would be that the student who misbehaves be quiet and follow the rules, the interviewer can infer the interviewee's assumptions about teacher and student roles, the purpose of schooling, etc. In this case, the student-teacher is placing all the responsibility for the incident on the student and assuming the student who misbehaves is the only one who needs to change in order to solve the problem. This amounts to following the standard protocol (Brookfield, 1997). The interviewee is failing to consider other possible factors in this situation, such as the nature of the tasks assigned, school climate, the students socio-economic background and even him/herself as the instructor. Thus, considering the assumptions underlying the interviewee's notion of the ideal may potentially present a valuable opportunity for critical reflection.

In order to facilitate this stage, the interviewer will use the interviewing skills mentioned above- attending and listening skills, restatements, paraphrases, summaries, and questions- as appropriate. In addition, the facilitator will use feedback and interpretive skills to help the learner clearly identify and articulate his/her notion of the ideal. I would like to stress that the aim of this stage is only for the learner to express 'the ideal' as thoroughly as possible.

The goal of the fourth stage is to Surface and explore the unquestioned assumptions that underlie the practitioner's notion of 'the ideal.' When appropriate, this stage also includes the process of generating alternative frames of reference. As Ivey and Ivey (1999) point out, this stage may be the longest in the interview and may involve extensive use of influencing skills. In this stage, the facilitator will be more directive than in the previous stages in order to help the interviewee surface and test the assumptions implied in his/her ideal. This may be the most challenging part of the interview for both facilitator and practitioner. As regards the facilitator, the difficulty lays in giving a "challenging but respectful critical commentary on another person's ideas or actions" Brookfield (1997). In other words, the task of the interviewer is to engage the practitioner in a critical conversation, "a conversation in which someone is helped to come to an awareness of the assumptions under which she is operating, to investigate the extent to which these assumptions are well grounded in critically examined reality, to look at her ideas and actions from different viewpoints, and to think about the implications of the conversation for the future" Brookfield (1997). These -except for the exploration of future implications, which is postponed until the final stage- are the objectives of this stage.

The facilitator will use a wide variety of interviewing skills in this stage. First, in order to help the learner identify the assumptions underlying their practice as regards the critical incident, a skilled facilitator will use basic listening skills, questions, paraphrases, summaries as appropriate. The interviewer will also use reflection of meaning and feeling to help the students reflect upon the incident in a more holistic and critical way. It is crucial to help the learner feel comfortable and explore his/her assumptions in a non-judgmental atmosphere. Once the assumptions behind 'the ideal' have been surfaced and spelled out, it is time to explore them in a critical way and –if necessary- generate alternative frames of reference. At this point, I anticipate an extensive use of confrontation and influencing skills such as interpretation, reframing, self-disclosure, information, advice, opinion, suggestions, and feedback. Finally, because this is the most challenging stage of the interview for the interviewee, genuinely complimenting him/her and giving positive feedback are also important components of this stage.

For the purpose of clarification, let's examine a brief example of how some of the skills mentioned above may be used to help the hypothetical student-teacher presented above to surface one of the unquestioned assumptions as regards the critical incident:

> **Facilitator**: *You mentioned the fact that the student who was disruptive belongs to a minority group. I am impressed by your noticing that because it means you are taking into account the fact that this may be a factor in the problem. This is surely one of your strength in dealing with this situation.* (Positive Feedback)
> **Interviewee**: Thank you! Yes… [5"pause] Well… it's true, I did notice that... but... [3"pause] honestly, I am having a hard time seeing how ethnicity and socioeconomic background may be a factor here…
> **Facilitator**: *Well, it is not easy to see how race and socioeconomic status may be influencing the student's behavior... May be a good place to start exploring this would be to identify what are unquestioned assumptions that would prevent you from considering ethnicity and socioeconomic background as a factor. Then, we may be able to critically explore these assumptions to decide whether they should be challenged...* (Restatemet, Suggestion/Reframing)
> **Interviewee**: OK. Um… I'm not sure… [hesitant] May be such an assumption could be that ethnicity and socioeconomic background does not affect the way students learn… Yes, I can see that this assumption is easy to challenge, but… honestly, I think this is what I assume, that is why I cannot explore it as a factor…

This short exchange illustrates how positive feedback, restatements, suggestions and reframing may be used to help the interviewee surface an assumption that he/she had never acknowledged, let alone question. Once assumptions have been identified, the facilitator can help the practitioner test these frames of reference and formulate alternative ones, if this is appropriate.

Finally, the last stage in this Five-Stage interview has the aim of determining how the practitioner's ideal has changed in the light critical reflection and how his/her response to incidents like the one analyzed will change. If the characteristics of the critical incident being discussed allow for it, it would be very appropriate to help the interviewee identify possible changes of behavior and agree on some "homework" for the practitioner to put these new behaviors that reflect the change in assumptions into practice. As Ivey and Ivey point out: "The work that clients do after the interview is as important as or more important that what they do in the session with you. The real impact of the interview and the confrontations will show in the next session and in [the interviewee's] life after the interviewing is completed." This is also true of an interview that facilitates critical reflection, different interviewees will need very different amounts of time in order to internalize alternative assumptions and act upon them. Thus, it may be helpful for the interviewee to identify, together with the interviewer, behaviors that would reflect the change in assumptions. This final stage, then, may include the process of helping the interviewee to generate an action plan that will put into practice and test the new assumptions the practitioner generated. In this is done, the challenges expected in carrying out this plan should also be explored by briefly focusing on the different factors that would be involved.

Interviewing skills particularly appropriate for this stage are summarization, open questions, and focusing. Focusing may be used, for instance, in order to help practitioners "to focus both internally on their own practices and externally on the social conditions of their practice." For it would be important to help practitioners be aware of the limitations that the system they are immersed in and society at large impose on their practice. In some cases, depending on the nature of the assumptions that have been challenged, this focus on social conditions may be crucial in facilitating the generation of alternatives that are politically safe. For instance, reflection about the need to careflully choose the level of accommodation to the system may be especially necessary in a context such as a country under a totalitarian government. Finally, the interview may be closed with a summary of the newly generated assumptions or the action plan.

In this work, I have proposed a five-stage model to facilitate practitioners' critical reflection by means of one-on-one interviews. This model is an adaptation of the Critical Practice Audit (Brookfield, 1997), based on the five-stage interview structure, by Ivey and Ivey, 1999. In addition, I have addressed the fact that in order for critical reflection to take place in the learning situation, a level of trust has to be achieved between the learner and the facilitator, so that the learner feels safe to critically examine his/her experiences and actions. Such an environment may be achieved by using self-disclosure to model critical reflection; attending skills to convey the idea that what the interviewee has to say is important; paraphrases and summary to show the interviewee that he/she has been heard; and confrontation and influencing skills to help the interviewee safely surface and examine his/her assumptions and generate alternative ones when needed. Thus, appropriate communication skills are an essential complement to the proposed five-stage. I believe this model to facilitate critical reflection by means of the identification of a critical incident provides a structure that, when coupled with effective interviewing skills, has the potential to be very powerful in helping learners surface and critically explore the assumptions that shape their practice.

Brookfield, S. (1997). Assessing Critical Thinking. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 75*, 17-26.
Deshler, J. D. a. K., E. (1995). *Facilitating Adult Learning Sourcebook, Unit II: Traditions of Practice in Adult Education*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Instructional Materials Service.
Ivey, A. E. a. I, M. B. (1999). *Intentional Interviewing and Counseling: Facilitating Client Development in a Multicultural Society*: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company. A division of International Thompson Publishing Inc.
Postle, D. (1993). Putting the Heart Back into Learning. In D. Boud, R. Cohen and D. Walker (Ed.), *Using Experience for Learning* (pp. 33-45). Buckingham, MK: The Open Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press.